

Prepositions

Ref Hsk3 Grammar

关于 — “about, regarding, as for”

关于 (guānyú) flags the **topic** a sentence is about — “about, regarding, as for.” Used this way it opens the sentence, setting the subject up before you say anything about it: “As for X, ...”.

Structure: 关于 + Topic ,

{zh: 关于 |guān yú|as for / 中国 |Zhōng guó|Chinese / 历史 |lì shǐ|history / , 我 |wǒ|I / 知道 |zhī dào|know / 的 |de / 不多 |bù duō|not much / 。 }

As for Chinese history, I don't know much.

{zh: 关于 |guān yú|as for / 你 |nǐ|your / 的 |de / 建议 |jiàn yì|suggestion / , 老板 |lǎo bǎn|the boss / 还 |hái|still / 在 |zài / 考虑 |kǎo lǜ|considering it / 。 }

As for your suggestion, the boss is still thinking it over.

Remember: 关于 + topic = a **headline** at the front of the sentence (“Regarding X, ...”). It can't sit mid-sentence like English “about.”

Watch out

- Many English “about”s are **baked into the Chinese verb** — say 聊你的工作 (“talk about your job”), not 聊关于

直到 ... 才 ... — “not until”

直到 (zhídào) means “all the way until (a point).” Pair it with 才 and you get the emphatic “**not until** X did Y happen” — the 才 is what stamps on the “and that’s surprisingly late.”

Structure: 直到 + Time / Event , Subject + 才 + Verb

{zh: 直到 |zhí dào|not until / 十二点半 |shí èr diǎn bàn|half past twelve / , 我 |wǒ|I / 才 |cái|only then / 做完 |zuò wán|finished / 作业 |zuò yè|the homework / 。 }

I didn't finish my homework until half past twelve.

{zh: 他 |tā|he / 直到 |zhí dào|not until / 医生 |yī shēng|the doctor / 来 |lái|came / 了 |le / , 才 |cái|only then / 放心 |fàng xīn|relaxed / 。 }

He didn't relax until the doctor came.

Remember: 直到 sets the **deadline**, 才 delivers the “**finally / only then.**” Drop the 才 and you lose the “annoyingly late” punch.

Watch out

- The subject may also go before 直到: 我直到十二点半才 ...

向 — “towards, to (and sometimes from)”

向 (xiàng) aims an action **towards** a person or direction — no actual movement required (向他笑, “smile at him”). The twist English speakers must memorise: a few verbs that take “**from**” in English use 向 (“toward”) in Chinese — 向 ... 借钱 (“borrow from”), 向 ... 学习 (“learn from”).

Structure: 向 + Direction / Person + Verb

{zh: 向 |xiàng / 前 |qián|forward / 看 |kàn|look / 。 }

Look ahead.

{zh: 你 |nǐ|you / 必须 |bì xū|must / 向 |xiàng|to / 他 |tā|him / 道歉 |dào qiàn|apologise / ! }

You must apologise to him!

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 不 |bù|don't / 喜欢 |xǐ huan|like / 向 |xiàng|from / 朋友 |péng you|friends / 借钱 |jiè qián|borrowing money / 。 }

I don't like borrowing money from friends.

Remember: 向 = an **arrow** pointing at someone. Even “learn / borrow **from**” is framed as aiming *toward* the source in Chinese: 向老师学习 (“learn toward the teacher”).

Watch out

- Use it with verbs of facing or directing: 向前走 (“walk forward”), 向我求助 (“turn to me for help”).